

Grant Number: 1T15AI07592-01

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Project Title: A MODULAR SHORT COURSE IN RESEARCH ETHICS

Description:

Ours is a project to develop, offer, evaluate, and disseminate ten or eleven modules on topics in research ethics together with a method for offering them in a series to form a short course. They may also be incorporated into an existing course. A significant feature of the modules is that they use active learning methods (methods that engage the participants rather than treat them as only an audience, methods such as joint problem-solving with realistic scenarios, learner interviews of faculty on such subjects as how the faculty member apportions credit on joint projects.) The module series addresses educational needs not met by most existing courses in research ethics. The participants in the short course are the students, trainees, and faculty of departments, laboratories, and research groups. The involvement of entire groups is intended to make use of the skills and knowledge within the group, enable senior investigators to be more articulate about their own practices and the reasons of them, and to create a foundation for exchange that continues well beyond the brief time spent in the course sessions.

The modular approach enables groups to select the modules most relevant to their own research, and makes available education on such specialized topics as the ethics of research with human subjects who have dementia. Each module will present the background material on the topic and will include student-faculty exchanges. In most cases, these exchanges will take the form of problem-solving discussions carried out by students, trainees, and research supervisors in a research group. Discussion will focus on scenarios that describe realistic problems, that is, open-ended situations requiring response (as contrasted with cases that state completed behavior and require only a judgment on acts that have been performed). In a few cases, exchanges will take the form of interviews of individual faculty members by the students/trainees. The modules will be written by knowledgeable individuals, many of whom have national reputations for their work in their subject areas.

The order of work for the project had to be changed when the start date was moved back from June 1 to September 1, 1999. However, we have drafted and reviewed five modules: the ethics of research with children, the ethics of research with people who have dementia, the ethics of genetic research, responsible authorship, the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Drafts of modules on the ethics of research with people who are mentally ill, the ethics of research on human biological materials, the ethics of research with animals will be reviewed within the month. One module has seen a pilot offering in February. Seven of the total of eight will have been offered at least once by June.

The remaining three modules, on Conflicts and Responsibilities in the Editing and Reviewing of Journals and Grant Applications, on The Collection, Retention, Sharing, and Interpretation of Data, and on Ethics and Equity in the Selection of Populations Recruited as Research Subjects will be drafted and reviewed this summer and offered on a pilot basis at least once in the fall. Beginning in fall of 2000, we will begin offering module sequences to participating departments and laboratory groups at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and collaborating institutions. They will be evaluated in terms of how well they meet the project objectives, including enhancement of groups' ability to discuss research ethics. New scenarios suitable for specific disciplines will continue to be developed in discussion with each of the departments or groups offering the modules. The courses resulting from various configurations of individual modules will be evaluated further and revised. In the third year, the course materials will be made available to the public on the WWW, the courses will again be taught at CWRU and collaborating institutions, and we will host visitors who wish to come to CWRU to gain practical experience in using the modules and method.

Modules: The Ethics of Research with Human Subjects Who Are Mentally Ill
Ethics and Equity in the Selection of Populations Recruited as Research Subjects
The Ethics of Research with Human Subjects Who Have Dementia
The Ethics of Research with Children
The Ethics of Research with Human Biological Materials
The Ethics of Using Animals in Research
The Collection, Retention, Sharing, and Interpretation of Data
Responsible Authorship
Conflicts and Responsibilities in the Editing and Reviewing of Journals and Grant Applications
Responsibilities and Conflicts in the Supervisor-Supervisee Relationship
The Ethics of Genetic Research

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Fiscal Year: 1999
Department: PHILOSOPHY
Project Start: 01-SEP-99
Project End: 31-AUG-02
ICD: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ALLERGY AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES
IRG: ZRG1